



Better Renal Services Steering Committee

Meeting 7 Communiqué

20 November 2024

Introduction

The Better Renal Services for First Nations Peoples Steering Committee (the Committee) provides advice on the implementation of the Better Renal Services for First Nations Peoples Measure (Better Renal Services measure). The Better Renal Services measure will provide \$73.2 million to fund up to 30 four-chair dialysis units, including workforce accommodation where required, to provide dialysis on Country to First Nations Australians with end-stage kidney disease.

Summary of discussion

The Co-Chair provided an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed Members to Meeting 7. Members discussed the importance of public reporting of renal issues and funding, particularly in relation to health practitioners delivering dialysis.

A representative from the MBS Policy and Reviews Branch provided members with an update on the process to review the eligibility of MBS item 13105. The department is collecting data to understand current utilisation and the policy reasons for the change. Members discussed broadening the scope of services required for dialysis patients and highlighting the need for a coordinated approach between Commonwealth and state governments. Members also raised the importance of prevention efforts and the role of Aboriginal health practitioners in them, and the need for better data on the burden of disease.

The Co-Chair provided an update on the progress of Round 3, advising that preparation of the grant's documentation for the seven identified dialysis sites is underway.

Ember Advisors presented its approach to estimating the need and current access for dialysis services among First Nations communities using linked data. Members raised concerns about the challenges of obtaining accurate data and the limitations of current data sources. They emphasised the need for a comprehensive and accurate dataset to inform further site selection and operational planning.

The need for a forward work plan for the Steering Committee was discussed to address sustainable services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving dialysis on country. The Steering Committee can play a role in bringing together key stakeholders to discuss and plan for coordinated care, noting the challenges faced in approval processes and inconsistent standards across jurisdictions.

Outcomes

- Co-Chair to follow up with members regarding renal services costings as evidence for MBS review
- Ember Advisors team to continue its data analysis and provide comprehensive dataset by mid-February
- Nominated members of the Steering Committee to join the Working Group to guide Ember Advisors' analysis work
- Secretariat to schedule first meeting for Working Group
- Secretariat to update the forward work plan and circulate to members for comment
- Co-Chair to explore opportunities to address inconsistencies in licencing standards across jurisdictions

Next Meeting

- To be confirmed.